(c) how the Government propose to make good the expenditure incurred on the expeditions in case the ban comes into force?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA): (a) Ten Indian scientific expeditions to Antarctica have been launched so far and the total expenditure incurred is Rs. 69.85 crores.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties including India have now agreed to prohibit mineral resource activities in Antarctica for a period of 50 years, with a provision for review at the end of that period.

(c) The main thrust of the Indian Antarctic programme is scientific, aimed at contributing to international endeavour in enlightening our understanding of the various critical process that determine the environment and climate of our planet, but can be best studied from this unique vantage observatory, as they are especially well projected on this continental polar region. The prohibition on mining in Antarctica does not apply to scientific activities and would, therefore, not affect the Indian Antarctic Programme.

[*Translation*]

Amendment to Essential Commodities Act, 1955

*137. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal to amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 is under consideration of the Government; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

[*English*]

Artificial Colour/Flavours

*138 SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the artificial colours/flavours manufacturing industry is a very highly profit-oriented industry;

(b) whether the Government propose to have a cost-audit done of all these artificial colours and flavours units in consumer interest in view of the fast growing use of these flavours and colours which do not have any food value at all;

(c) if not, the reasons for not undertaking this urgently needed step; and

(d) the number of firms in the organised and other sectors which are manufacturing these products?

*THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (DR. CHINTA MOHAN): (a) Such units are mostly small scale units whose profitability has not been assessed by the Government.

(b) and (c) The Government does not propose at this stage to have a cost audit of this industry as it is not a priority industry. However, if some relevant facts come to the notice of the Government then Government would be prepared to consider the matter further.

(d) There are nine firms in the organised sector engaged in the manufacture of flavours and colours. The exact number of small scale units manufacturing these products is not readily available as small scale units are registered with the State Directorate of Industries.